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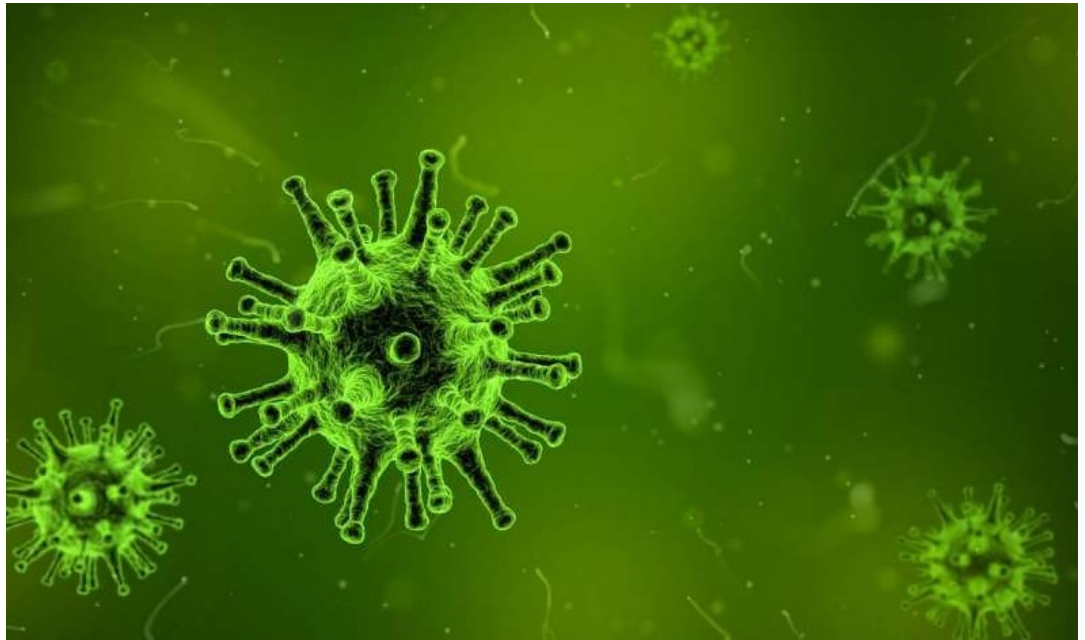
**Technology and health governance - the dangers of digital exclusion**

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Questioning the usefulness of technology in today's world, in any area of human activity, is moot. Undoubtedly, in its many forms, technology assists and sometimes even supersedes human capability, especially when dealing with massive amounts of data and information. The usefulness of technology increases exponentially during a crisis when immediate, large-scale spread of information or data sharing is required. During the SARS epidemic in 2003, [the tech tools](#) for remote communication and collaboration were in their infancy or in some cases, yet to make an appearance such as Facebook and Twitter. We are now seeing the role of technology playing out in real time during this outbreak of COVID-19, that has been running governments, supply chains, economies, global travel and stock markets amok. In some cases, the virus is sorely testing the upper limits of

nations' abilities to control the scourge that has descended upon them.

Technology has been front and centre during this particular outbreak. This is especially so in converging technologies such as mobile computing, mobile communications and broadband internet. There are three key areas where this is best reflected. First, when in quarantine, especially in another country, the use of mobile and broadband communication has allowed people to stay in touch with relatives and friends worried about their well-being. There are many who claimed that this constant contact with the outside world through social media reduced the sense of isolation and separation that being quarantined inevitably brings. The next deals with tech tools for remote communication and collaboration. Today's technology allows employees to not be physically present in an office

or even within the organisation's premises when doing their jobs. Since COVID-19 has created significant disruptions to the lives of millions, technology has allowed business continuity as well as social distancing, aiming for minimal disruptions to economic activities in a digital world during a crisis. And lastly, technology allows access to information and can mobilise populations to pressure governments into action. It becomes increasingly difficult to control access to data and information. It also makes it easier for citizens to call out errant officials and their mishandling of the situation as well, as we have seen from recent cases around the world.

The fear of COVID-19 spreading into nations without the ability to handle the virus is scary on several fronts. Apart from the inability of public health systems to withstand the crisis in terms of availability of trained health workers, medical equipment and actual hospitals and transport infrastructure, another issue is one of weak digital connectivity. Improved connectivity prompts several technological advances and is a key enabler in fighting against any epidemic. There have been significant advances in this area, but access in some nations, especially in rural areas, is still limited.

During an outbreak, clear messaging to the local population is vital to ensure they are informed and reminded to use appropriate precautions. Connectivity and access, especially in far-flung areas, take on a new urgency in such situations. Technology also links hospitals and health institutions, as well as health professionals the world over, making it easier to monitor spread of infections over large areas. These are just a few ways by which technology assists in fighting outbreaks.

According to a [2019 OECD report](#), there is a significant connectivity gap between the most developed countries in Southeast Asia and those that are lagging behind. Much of the rural areas in the region have limited connectivity and supporting infrastructure. Part of the problem is physical; the presence of mountains and rivers, and part of it is a result of cost and the demand for energy to get the infrastructure set up and running. The spread of COVID-19 should highlight the importance of creating better policies on how we might digitise strategies to address such outbreaks in the region. Notwithstanding the negative aspects of the use of technology, including the rampant and often uncontrollable spread of false information, it can be an effective

tool that can be used to detect and treat patients. Therefore, one of the priorities in health governance for ASEAN would be to bridge the digital divide as part of pandemic preparedness.

Technology cannot stop the spread of a disease but it can educate and warn those on the ground and help reduce the impact. Where there is significant digital exclusion, our fight can be considerably weakened against a powerful pandemic.

## Suggested Readings

- Swisher, Kara, 2020, "How Will Tech Help in a Time of Pandemic?", *The New York Times*, 27 February
- OECD, 2019, "Southeast Asia Going Digital - Connecting SMEs", Paris, OECD

## CLIMATE CHANGE

## NEWS &amp; COMMENTARIES

**Climate change cause of Greater Jakarta floods, BMKG says**

Climate change-driven global warming is believed to be a factor behind repeated instances of severe flooding across Greater Jakarta since early January 2020, including a flood that inundated parts of the capital in late February 2020.

**Gemma Holliani Cahya**

**The Jakarta Post**

26 February 2020

**'We are all at risk': Report highlights water security as a major priority**

A summer of extreme weather events has tested the resilience of Australia's regional communities and raised question marks about Australia's capacity to deal with climate change.

**Euan Black**

**The New Daily**

26 February 2020

**Budget debate: Transform mindsets, not just infrastructure, in fight against climate change, say MPs**

To encourage "buy-in" to green agenda from Singaporeans, public education efforts should be ramped up.

**Danson Cheong**

**The Straits Times**

27 February 2020

**Deregulation bill hurts Indonesia's fishers, coastal communities, experts say**

Indonesian President Joko Widodo has proposed a sweeping slate of deregulation to boost investment, affecting laws on fisheries, maritime affairs, and coastal and small island development. Some of the proposed revisions may hurt small-scale and traditional fishers.

**Basten Gokkon**

**Mongabay**

2 March 2020

**Climate change: Greenpeace stops Barclays from opening branches**

Greenpeace claims that among banks, Barclays is the biggest funder of fossil fuels in Europe. It wants the bank to switch its funding into renewable energy.

**BBC News**

2 March 2020

**Climate change affected Australia's wildfires, scientists confirm**

Human-caused climate change had an impact on Australia's recent devastating wildfires, making the likelihood of extremely high-risk conditions that led to widespread burning at least 30 percent more.

**Henry Fountain**

**The New York Times**

4 March 2020

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

**The world climate and security report 2020**

Climate change-exacerbated water insecurity is already a significant driver of instability. According to 93% of climate security and military experts surveyed for this report, water insecurity will pose a significant or higher risk to global security by 2030. Rising authoritarianism, sharpened global competition and national agendas are hampering the needed cooperation among nations to address the security risks of climate change.

**Expert Group of International Military Council on**

**Climate and Security,**

**The Center for Climate and Security**

2020

**Impacts of climate change on fish, relevant to the coastal and marine environment around the UK**

The appearance of warm-water (Lusitanian) fish species in UK waters along with local declines of some cold-affinity species provides the most compelling evidence of a climate change effect.

**P. J. Wright, J. K. Pinnegar, and C. Fox,**  
**MCCIP Science Review**

2020

## EVENTS &amp; ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Ocean Youth Forum**

The Ocean Youth Forum will showcase youth-led ocean solutions focusing on the two pillars of the theme: science and innovation.

**Lisbon, Portugal**

30-31 May 2020

**XVII World Water Congress**

Since 1973, the International Water Resources Association has held a World Water Congress every three years in various locations around the world. The objective of the World Water Congress is to provide a meeting place to share experiences, promote discussion, and to present new knowledge, research results and new developments in the field of water sciences around the world.

**Daegu, South Korea**

21-25 September 2020



## ENERGY SECURITY

## NEWS AND COMMENTARIES

**Indonesian authorities call for calm after radiation found at housing complex near Jakarta**

*The nuclear regulatory agency BAPETEN discovered an elevated level of radioactivity in a housing complex near Jakarta, causing alarm among locals. BAPETEN began investigating the possible source radioactive contamination.*

**Reuters**

**Channel News Asia**

17 February 2020

**Japan's energy policy nine years after Fukushima**

*Although Japan has made a number of changes to its energy policy since the meltdown in Fukushima, it is yet to fully heed the lessons of the triple disaster.*

**Masahiro Sugiyama**

**East Asia Forum**

9 March 2020

**IAEA to support countries in the detection of Novel Coronavirus**

*The IAEA will provide diagnostic kits, equipment and training in nuclear-derived detection techniques to countries asking for assistance in tackling COVID-19.*

**IAEA News**

10 March 2020

**Rising temperatures surge energy demand in ASEAN**

*Southeast Asia's overall energy demand is set to grow by 60% between now and 2040 as higher temperatures have led to an increase use of electricity.*

**Jillian Louis**

**ASEAN Post**

10 March 2020

**The losers - and even bigger losers - of an oil price war between Saudi Arabia and Russia**

*An intensifying oil price war between Saudi Arabia and Russia poses negative market conditions for the world's largest crude producers, with many braced for sliding revenues over the coming months.*

**Sam Meredith**

**CNBC**

12 March 2020

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

**Gender and Nuclear Security: Challenges and Opportunities**

*The report presents key insights into the challenges and opportunities for achieving gender parity within the nuclear security sector and concludes with specific steps organisations can take to achieve this goal.*

**World Institute for Nuclear Security**

**Vienna: WINS**

2019

**Renewable energy finance: Green bonds**

*Renewables have emerged as a major recipient of green bond proceeds. This brief highlights the need for more green bonds to drive sustainable, climate safe, energy finance.*

**International Renewable Energy Agency**

**Abu Dhabi: IRENA**

2020

## EVENTS &amp; ANNOUNCEMENTS

**National Energy Efficiency Conference 2020**

*The Conference is Australia's annual flagship event for energy efficiency, energy management and demand response.*

**Melbourne, Australia**

26-27 May 2020

**Singapore International Energy Week 2020**

*Singapore International Energy Week (SIEW) is an annual week-long energy event bringing together policy makers, industry partners and international organisations.*

**Singapore**

26-30 October 2020

## FOOD SECURITY

## NEWS &amp; COMMENTARIES

**Why in a cheap food paradise, some Singaporeans are still going hungry**

*Unique circumstances of some individuals place them beyond the reach of existing assistance programmes.*

**Goh Chiew Tong, Christy Yip and Corine Tiah**  
**Channel News Asia**

16 February 2020

**Global poultry trade affected by Coronavirus**

*COVID 19-related restrictions on moving poultry are causing supply chain gluts in major ports, including China's.*

**Tony McDougal**  
**Poultryworld.net**

26 February 2020

**Locust plague: How China sent 100,000 ducks to fight 'worst locust attack in decades'**

*China is utilising 100,000 ducks, each eating more than 200 locusts a day, to deal with locust swarms.*

**Tim Redigolo**  
**Express**

2 March 2020

**Locust plague sparks national emergency as insects swarm fields and devastate crops**

*There is an urgent need for pesticides in Pakistan and other countries, while ensuring food is safe for consumption.*

**Laura O'Callaghan**  
**Express**

6 March 2020

**Zimbabwe dismisses UN Food findings**

*There are ongoing debates in the country on whether a prevalent food crisis really exists and if it is caused by politics-related distribution problems.*

**Sundaynews**  
**Bulawayo**

8 March 2020

**Food prices after a hard Brexit could increase by £50 per week**

*Brexit could lead to rising food prices especially the prices of meat, dairy and jams, according to the University of Warwick's study.*

**Alice Scott**  
**University of Warwick**

9 March 2020

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

**Anticipated impacts of Brexit scenarios on UK food prices and implications for policies on poverty and health: a structured expert judgement approach**

*The report analyses the impact of Brexit-induced food inflation on economic security and public health in the UK.*

**Martine Jayne Barons and Willy Aspinall,**  
**BMJ Open 2020,**

10 March 2020

**Specialisation in food production, global food security and sustainability**

*Specialising rather than diversifying food production can lead to worse food supply and food security outcomes.*

**Mercedes Campi, Marco Duenas and Giorgio Fagiolo,**  
**Library of Economics and Management (LEM)**  
**Working Paper Series 2020/05**

February 2020

## EVENTS &amp; ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Global Food Security Symposium**

*This symposium will introduce the need to innovate food systems to prepare for future challenges in the next decade and beyond.*

**Washington, DC, USA**  
26 March 2020

**Launch event - 2020: Global Food Policy Report: Building Inclusive Food Systems**

*This event will facilitate discussions on the role of inclusive food systems in empowering disadvantaged groups.*

**Washington, DC, USA**  
7 April 2020



## HEALTH SECURITY

## NEWS &amp; COMMENTARIES

**As the coronavirus outbreak rages on, perceptions of a country's health security to sway investors' decision**

*The ability of different countries to effectively deal with outbreaks such as COVID-19 will have an impact on investor sentiment.*

**Cheryl Arcibal**  
**South China Morning Post**  
26 February 2020

**Here are the 24 countries that are least ready for a pandemic**

*Research that assessed how prepared 195 countries are for a major epidemic found that, overall, no country is prepared for a pandemic, but some are more ready than others.*

**Madison Hoff**  
**Business Insider US**  
11 March 2020

**Global Health Security - COVID-19: Is the humanitarian sector prepared?**

*The ongoing fight against COVID-19 highlights the obvious vulnerability of critical medical supplies and the role humanitarian aid can play in enabling better national and global response.*

**Lina Gong**  
**RSIS Commentaries**  
11 March 2020

**WHO declares a pandemic of coronavirus disease COVID-19**

*The WHO declared coronavirus a pandemic, reflecting alarm that countries are not working quickly and aggressively enough to fight the disease.*

**William Wan**  
**The Washington Post**  
12 March 2020

**The coronavirus is now a pandemic - what does this mean for us?**

*The WHO hopes that this labelling will change how countries tackle the crisis, giving governments around the world greater urgency to enact emergency action plans to put a lid on its spread.*

**The Straits Times**  
12 March 2020

**The burden of COVID-19: Urgent need for social safety nets**

*Policies to keep countries safe from pandemics must come with clear and timely social safety net programmes to protect the vulnerable poorer income groups.*

**Jose Ma. Luis Montesclaros and Mely Caballero-Anthony**  
**RSIS Commentaries**  
19 March 2020

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

**Measuring antibiotic availability and use in 20 low- and middle-income countries**

*A group of scientists examined antibiotic availability and use in health facilities in low- and middle-income countries, using the service provision assessment and service availability and readiness assessment surveys.*

**Rebecca Knowles et al., Bulletin of the World Health Organisation, Vol. 98, No. 3**  
2020

**Influence of trust on two different risk perceptions as an affective and cognitive dimension during Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) outbreak in South Korea: serial cross-sectional surveys**

*A series of cross-sectional surveys examine how people perceive risk during an epidemic, in this case, the 2015 MERS-CoV outbreak in South Korea.*

**Jang Mo Wan et al., BMJ Open, Vol. 10, No. 3**  
2020

## EVENTS &amp; ANNOUNCEMENTS

**AI in Healthcare**

*This event will provide a platform for global and local industry leaders to connect, engage and share experience on how AI is transforming the health sector globally.*

**Doha, Qatar**  
20 April 2020

**Digital Health World Congress 2020**

*The Congress will focus on the future of digital health with discussions about AI and blockchain in healthcare, and digital health ecosystem strategies.*

**London, United Kingdom**  
5-6 May 2020



## HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DISASTER RELIEF

### NEWS & COMMENTARIES

#### Roundup: Women and girls in disasters and crisis response

Women and girls are disproportionately affected by diseases, conflict, migration, disasters, and climate change. This series seeks to deepen our understanding of the issues women and girls face in the humanitarian sector.

**The New Humanitarian**

6 March 2020

#### Internal displacement is not an acceptable alternative to international protection

The concept of internal flight alternatives is sometimes used during refugee status determination procedures as a basis to deny international protection. This opinion piece describes how states use it and what are the impacts.

**Chloe Sydney**

**IDMC**

11 March 2020

#### Influencing behaviour in armed conflict - what is the point?

This blog article explores the reasons why we need to try to influence behaviour in armed conflict and outlines several ways to do it effectively.

**Eva Svoboda**

**ICRC**

12 March 2020

#### COVID-19 outbreak: How we deal with animals and the environment threatens human health

This article provides a brief of how emerging diseases can be brought about by environmental degradation and disruption of ecosystems.

**Kerry Bowman**

12 March 2020

#### Japan provides \$3.9 million to tackle Mekong flood and drought issues

The four-year funding which starts this year is intended to strengthen the capacity of the MRC's Regional Flood and Drought Management Center (RFDMC) in Phnom Penh.

**Mekong River Commission**

13 March 2020

#### COVID-19 and humanitarian response: Leave no-one behind

As more countries become affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is crucial to keep in mind vulnerable groups and those already affected by other humanitarian emergencies, placing them in acutely precarious situations.

**Alistair DB Cook**

**RSIS Commentaries**

20 March 2020

### SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

#### Multi-year humanitarian funding: Global baselines and trends (March 2020)

This study seeks to provide an indicative baseline for multi-year humanitarian funding, analysing data collected directly from Grand Bargain signatories.

**Global Humanitarian Assistance programme  
(Development Initiatives)**

2020

#### COVID-19: How to include marginalized and vulnerable people in risk communication and community engagement

This report presents the rationale for including gender, protection, and inclusion lens in planning and implementing risk communication and communication engagement initiatives.

**IFRC, UNOCHA, WHO**

2020

### EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### RISK Information Management, Risk Models and Applications Conference (RIMMA 2020)

This conference will explore the complexity of information management in disaster risk governance (in relation to UN Sendai Framework for DRR).

**Berlin, Germany**

26-27 May 2020

#### 16th International Conference on Structures under Shock and Impact

This conference will promote the need to enhance protection of civilian infrastructure and industrial facilities from natural disasters, technological accidents, and attacks.

**Lisbon, Portugal**

22-24 June 2020

## MIGRATION

## NEWS &amp; COMMENTARIES

**In climate-sensitive South Asia, migration could be the answer to survival**

*The economic consequences of climate change area are a significant factor driving migration in South Asia. However, migrants are also adapting better to climate change.*

**Spoorthy Raman**  
**Research Matters**  
27 February 2020

**Slow return of China's migrant workers hobbles factory restarts**

*With workplaces opening in China, more migrant workers are being asked to return to work. However, many are still trapped in their hometowns.*

**David Kirton**  
**Reuters**  
28 February 2020

**Coronavirus fuels rise in Hong Kong domestic worker sackings**

*Dozens of migrant workers are being fired amid the COVID-19 crisis in Hong Kong. Reasons for their dismissal including leaving their employers houses on their days off.*

**Raquel Carvalho**  
**South China Morning Post**  
1 March 2020

**Is the deployment ban of Filipino workers to Kuwait misconceived?**

*President Duterte imposed another deployment ban to Kuwait in January. However, the ban fails to address the root vulnerabilities of workers.*

**Henelito A Sevilla Jr**  
**East Asia Forum**  
6 March 2020

**Do pandemics strengthen the case for restricting immigration?**

*As COVID-19 spreads, some argue it strengthens the case for permanent migration restrictions. However, there is no evidence that long-term restrictions would be effective.*

**Ilya Somin**  
**Reason**  
13 March 2020

**Pandemics abroad: Immigration policy and the coronavirus in East Asia**

*COVID-19 has led to a tightening immigration policy across the region. Fuelled in part by social media, the effect on interstate relations has yet to be determined.*

**Robin Vochelet**  
**The McGill International Review**  
12 March 2020

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

**Fit for the future: Priorities for Australia's humanitarian action**

*Looking at Australia's humanitarian action, this report explores how the Australian government might realign its strategies in line with the World Humanitarian Summit.*

**ACFID Humanitarian Reference Group**  
2020

**International migration and health: it is time to go beyond conventional theoretical frameworks**

*The scale of 21<sup>st</sup> century migration has made studying migrant health patterns more complex. This paper looks at migrant health through the intersectionality framework to address the vulnerabilities that produce health inequalities*

**Muhammad Zakir Hossin**  
2020

## EVENTS &amp; ANNOUNCEMENTS

**International Dialogue on Migration**

*This year's International Dialogue on Migration will look at the place of migrant women in the sustainable development agenda.*

**New York, USA**  
30 April -1May 2020

**International Conference on Refugee and Forced Migration Studies**

*The World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology will bring together academics and practitioners to share their work in all aspects of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies.*

**Sydney, Australia**  
27-28 August 2020